

Middlesex Community College

Fall 2014 - online

Death & Dying - SOC F225-30 – CRN#3918 – 3 credits

Text: *Death & Dying Life & Living*, 7th ed., 2013, Corr & Corr

Instructor: Dr. Sheila Dupuis, Psy.D. (860) 659-0579; **Blackboard e-mail.**

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Course overview:

This course is a study of death and dying. The field is known as *thanatology*. Topics of study include cultural attitudes toward death, self- confrontation and value identification concerning death and dying, dealing with the dying and the process of death, grief and bereavement, survivors, the impact of death and dying across the life span, suicide, end of life planning, hospice care, euthanasia.

Core competencies:

The following core academic competencies, as established by Middlesex Community College, are met by taking this course: communication skills; conceptual and critical thinking skills; quantitative reasoning (through the understanding and interpretation of research statistics); technological literacy; information literacy; understanding of diversity; and the recognition of values, ethics, and responsible citizenship.

Course objectives:

By the end of this course, the student will have a greater understanding of the following:

- a. one's attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about death;
- b. theoretical perspectives regarding the meaning of death;
- c. biomedical approaches to the definition of death;
- d. the death system from a micro and macro perspective;
- e. historic and current causes of death;
- f. theoretical perspectives regarding the process of dying;
- g. hospice and palliative care;
- h. end of life issues and decisions;
- i. the tragedy of suicide;
- j. death due to violence;
- k. euthanasia, assisted death, the right to die;
- l. death in the life of a child;
- m. bereavement, grief, and mourning;
- n. rituals of response to death;
- o. caregiving for those who are dying and those left behind.

Method of evaluation: Total points 500 = 100%

1. Movie review - 25 points
2. Projects (2) - 75 points (obituary 25; death experience 50)
3. Position paper -100 points
4. Weekly Discussions - 300 points(20 points each)

Movie Review:

View the movie *Tuesdays with Morrie* (available at the MXCC Library). Write a 400 – 500 word review addressing the following questions: 1. What is your initial reaction to this movie? 2. What lessons did Mitch and Morrie learn from each other? 3. What is said in the movie about the difficulty of facing death? 4. Did you see any of the coping tasks individuals use to help the dying person from chapter 7? 5. How does Mitch change? **Due date: 10/19/14. Submit through assignment drop box.**

Projects:

#1 Obituary: Write your own obituary for use by a newspaper upon your death. For this assignment, you are to write a 200-300 word obituary that would be submitted to the newspaper upon your death. What would you want an obituary about you to state? How do you want to be remembered? Once you write the obituary, you will *write a concluding paragraph or two* that provides an introspective reflection on these questions: how did it feel to write this obituary? What does the final product tell you about how you want to be remembered? Does the obituary reflect who you are now or who you are aspiring to be or a little bit of both?

Due date: 9/21/14. Submit this paper in the assignment drop box.

#2 Recollection of Death Experiences: The purpose of this 2 – 3 page paper is to explore your personal experiences with death and how these experiences have shaped you and your attitudes toward death. This paper will cover one death or loss that you have experience on a personal level. For this event, you will provide the following: 1.) a detailed description of the event, (who died, how old you were at the time, how the person died, circumstances surrounding the death, etc.); 2.) your reflections of your **physical, cognitive, and emotional responses** to the event; 3.) your understanding of how the event impacted others around you, family members, friends, and the community if applicable; 4.) the funeral/memorial service planning process, if you were privy to it; 5.) the funeral/memorial service; 6.) the short and long term effect on you and your family and friends; 7.) and, finally, in a concluding paragraph, you will discuss how your attitudes and reaction to death have changed since your first experience to now. Do you believe your reactions to your death experiences reflect a “healthy” response? Why or why not? Do you feel a need to change your response pattern and, if so, what resources do you need to assist you with this? **Please note: While this paper should concentrate on death experiences, (the loss of a family member, friend, neighbor, pets,) you may describe other events of loss or separation such as divorce.** This paper should be between 2 - 4 pages. The contents of the paper will remain confidential. Though this paper will be written as a narrative, it **must** reflect college level writing, (e.g. correct grammar and spelling,) and should reflect your reading material.

Due date: 11/2/14. Submit through assignment drop box.

#3 Position paper:

This 5-6 page paper can be on any topic related to death and dying that particularly interests you. This can be a controversial issue or a personal value or belief that is important to you. You will

need to do your research, gather your information from reliable, scholarly sources, and write clearly about what you found in the research. Your research should support your opinion or point of view. You must use at least three scholarly, peer-reviewed resources (this excludes most web sites such as Wikipedia and ask.com). Citations of resources within the body of your paper and on your reference page must be in MLA or APA format.

Due Date: 11/23/14. Submit the paper in the assignment drop box.

Weekly discussions: Each week, you will be assigned a 4-5 part discussion question that requires your response. You are required to post a response to each discussion question **and** to **two** of your classmates or a classmate and your professor in the discussion section of blackboard. Your responses must reflect the reading in the text and other lecture notes or links as assigned. Furthermore, your responses must reflect the standard of college level writing, be free of grammatical and spelling errors, (obviously, no “instant messaging”/texting lingo or spelling,) and incorporate citation as appropriate. The discussion grading rubric can be accessed from the course home page. **Discussion questions are assigned on the Monday of each week, (except for the first week,) and your initial response is due the following Thursday at 11:59p.m; your two additional responses are due by Sunday 11:59pm.** The weekly discussion assignments are worth **20 points each.**

Reading assignments and due dates

<u>Class:</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Assignments:</u>
Week 1 - 8/25	Overview; getting acquainted	See “weekly assignments” Discussion
Week 2 - 9/1	Education about Death, Dying and Bereavement Goals of death education	Chapter 1 Discussion
Week 3 - 9/8	Changing Encounters with Death Causes of death; death rates Changing Attitudes toward Death Patterns of attitudes	Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Discussion
Week 4 - 9/15	Death-Related Practices & The American Death System Human induced death; death and media <i>Project #1 Obituary due 9/21</i>	Chapter 4 Discussion
Week 5 - 9/22	Cultural Patterns & Death A look at death among various cultures	Chapter 5 Discussion
Week 6 - 9/29	Coping with Dying Skills and approaches, living with Life-threatening illnesses	Chapter 6 Discussion
Week 7 - 10/6	Coping with Dying: How Individuals	

	Can Help Guidelines; communication, burnout	Chapter 7 Discussion
Week 8 - 10/13	Coping with Dying: How Communities Can Help Hospice and palliative care <i>Movie review: Due 10/19</i>	Chapter 8 Discussion
Week 9 - 10/20	Coping with Loss and Grief Mourning; anticipatory grief; Complicated grief Coping with Loss & Grief: How Individuals Can Help Death of pets; needs of bereaved	Chapter 9 Chapter 10 Discussion
Week 10 - 10/27	Coping with Loss and Grief: Funeral Practices Rituals and Memorials <i>Project #2 Death experience paper due 11/2</i>	Chapter 11 Discussion
Week 11 - 11/3	Children Concepts in childhood; attitudes; Children with illness Adolescents Concepts in adolescence; attitudes Homicide and suicide	Chapter 12 Chapter 13 Discussion
Week 12 - 11/10	Young and Middle-aged adults Encounters with death; attitudes	Chapter 14 Discussion
Week 13 - 11/17	Older Adults Attitudes; illness; loss of partner Legal, Conceptual, and Moral Issues Advanced directives; organ donation <i>Project #3 Position paper due 11/23</i>	Chapter 15 Chapter 16 Discussion
Week 14 - 11/24	Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior Patterns of suicide; intervention Assisted Suicide & Euthanasia Arguments and social policy	Chapter 17 Chapter 18 Discussion
Week 15 - 12/1	The Meaning & Place of Death in Life Afterlife; near-death experiences	Chapter 19 Discussion
Week 16 – 12/8	Alzheimer's Disease Dementia, Alzheimer's & related disorders	Chapter 20 Discussion

Withdrawal Policy

“You may withdraw from this class any time before the end of the 11th week* of the semester. *For this semester, the last day to withdraw is April 14, 2013.* A completed and signed withdrawal form must be on file in the Records Office by the deadline in order to receive a “W” on your transcript. If you fail to complete this process on time, you will receive a letter grade at the end of the semester, which will include zeroes for any work not submitted. Course withdrawals may affect financial aid and veteran’s benefits. Please make this decision carefully and with the help of your advisor. See the Academic Calendar and the College Catalog for specific dates and procedures regarding the withdrawal process.”

ADA Accommodations Statement:

“ Students with physical or learning disabilities who may require accommodations are encouraged to contact the Counseling Office. After disclosing the nature of the disability, students are urged to discuss their needs with individual instructors. This should be done at the beginning of each semester. Instructors, in conjunction with appropriate college officials, will provide assistance and/or accommodations only to those students who have completed this process.”

Academic Honesty Statement:

“At Middlesex Community-Technical College we expect the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in accordance with the Board of Trustees’ Proscribed Conduct Policy in Section 5.2.1 of the Board of Trustees’ Policy Manual. This policy prohibits cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, unauthorized access to examinations or course materials, plagiarism, and other proscribed activities. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another’s idea(s) or phrase(s) and representing that/those ideas as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally.” (Board of Trustees’ Policy 5.2.1)”

Accommodation Statement:

“If your religious obligations conflict with the course calendar requirements, and if you wish to request an accommodation, you must make your request in writing prior to the date of the assessment or activity you will miss and preferably at the beginning of the semester. When requesting a make-up quiz, test, exam, assignment, or activity, state the reason for your request and the date(s) on which your religious obligation(s) will conflict with the course calendar